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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents suggestions and guidelines for the effective use of public relations (PR) techniques during professional negotiations (PN) among teachers, administrators, and boards of education. Introductory sections present the National Education Association (NEA) position regarding professional negotiation and grievance procedures and point up the need for building understanding and support for the negotiation process by both members of the association and the general public. Included are sections on organizational framework, involvement before negotiations, selection of personnel to direct and coordinate public relations, specific public relations problems, and specification of "the spokesman." Other sections suggest approaches to advance news stories, news releases during negotiations, getting to know newsmen, public relations during impasse and when negotiation is completed. An appendix contains a sample news release schedule during negotiations, models of letter correspondence and taped communication for use in answering services, and a newspaper ad. (JS)

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PR BOOKSHELF NO.

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The PR in PN

for education associations

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A service of the public relations department of your state association and the NEA's Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations and Division of Field Services.

Foreword

No innovation in this century has made an impact upon the profession of teaching that can compare to the thrust of professional negotiation (PN)—the joint planning among teachers, administrators, and boards of education for the improvement and upgrading of the schools and the instructional processes and conditions within them. PN has become the official voice for hundreds of thousands of teachers throughout the United States. It has become the way teachers can put their unique expertise to work for the benefit of education and children.

The National Education Association (NEA) has the following resolution (C-33) on PN and grievance procedures:

> **The National Education Association believes that local associations and school boards must negotiate written master contracts. Such contracts should result from negotiation in good faith between associations and school boards, through representatives of their choosing, to establish, maintain, protect, and improve terms and conditions for professional service and other matters of mutual concern, including a provision for financial responsibility.**
>
> **The Association encourages local affiliates to see that teachers are guaranteed a voice in the establishment of instructional policies. Procedures for the resolution of impasse must be included. Grievance procedures shall be provided in the master contract with definite steps to appeal the application or interpretation of school board policies and agreements. Binding arbitration shall be a part of the grievance procedure.**
>
> **Those representing local affiliates in the negotiation process shall be granted released time without loss of pay.**
>
> **Faculty and building level administrators, in order to preserve professional relationships within school staffs, should not be negotiators for school boards. The Association recommends establishment of personnel offices at the central administrative levels to represent school boards in negotiation.**

The Association urges the extension of the rights of professional negotiation to the faculties of institutions of higher education.

The Association urges its members and affiliates to seek state legislation that clearly and firmly mandates the adoption of professional negotiation agreements.

The Board of Directors shall establish a Professional Negotiation Committee immediately to facilitate the achievement of professional negotiation agreements, and to maintain an efficient communication system on professional negotiation between the Association and its affiliates.

The rights and privileges of all teachers should always be respected regardless of what organization has sole negotiation rights.

From rudimentary beginnings in the early and middle sixties when PN went through its first uncontrolled birth pains, there has now developed a sophisticated process that demands a high degree of expertise in its practitioners. PN is, indeed, a sensitive and complicated process involving more than anything else a keen awareness of the human and public relations (PR) aspects of talking together.

For teachers, professional negotiation has achieved a number of significant breakthroughs—among them:

- Formally opened lines of communication among teachers, administrators, and boards of education
- Established teachers as full partners in the educational enterprise
- Increased salaries and other welfare benefits for teachers
- Provided a written and comprehensive procedure for solving professional and educational concerns
- Brought teachers face to face with the responsibilities that go with this new authority and power.

But negotiation has also been responsible for changing the "image" of teachers—their image of themselves and that held of them by school board members, administrators, and the public.

PN desperately needs interpretation and effective public relations within the local teachers association and with the public if it is to successfully accomplish its ultimate goals.

A Case Study

Last year, the Horace Mann Education Association (HMEA) —a fictitious name—plunged into professional negotiation in an attempt to win the first agreement in the history of its school district. Like some other local teachers associations, the members did not fully understand negotiation techniques and methods. The PN committee was not as well prepared as it should have been . . . for either negotiation or the results. Its initial proposal was itemized for costs to the school district and announced to the public in a screaming, 8-column headline:

TEACHERS' DEMANDS TOTAL $1.8 MILLION

The public resented it. Letters to the editor poured into the daily newspaper editorial room and were promptly published. HMEA leaders rose in defense and issued a blistering statement, indicating it was not their concern where the school board found the money demanded by teachers.

The day after this statement was published, a front-page editorial by the newspaper blasted the local association. It began—

> We trust that the members of the Horace Mann Education Association, or at least those who are serving as their spokesmen, have reconsidered their remarks in connection with salary demands.
>
> Their outburst was ill-mannered, ill-timed, and thoroughly ill-considered.

The editorial ended by suggesting, "A good place to begin resolving the district's problems would be for the Horace Mann Education Association to retract its intemperate remarks."

The publisher, that same day, "ordered" HMEA leaders to his office. When they responded, he gave them 30 minutes of his undivided attention . . . by pounding the table and verbally lashing them and the teaching profession! It ended with his demand that teachers accept the counteroffer made by the local school board or his newspaper would "publicly crucify the association."

To make a long story short, HMEA leaders buckled under to public pressure and accepted the school board's initial proposal. Members of the association were demoralized. Their first experi-

ence with PN ended in failure. And citizens in their community formed new attitudes—not very positive ones at that—about negotiation and teachers.

This year association leaders changed all that.

They did it in two ways: by *improved performance* in the complete process of negotiation and through effective utilization of *public relations techniques.*

They changed their "image," both that of their members toward the association and the views held by citizens and other teachers, for this association had learned of the necessity to build understanding and support for the negotiation process.

More Than Muscle and Skill

Far too many local associations have had experiences with professional negotiation similar to those of the HMEA. Many associations have found that just "muscle and skill" at the negotiation table are not enough; being "right" is not enough. If school board members feel that they are representing the public interest in their opposition to teachers' proposals, it may be that there has been no indication of public support for the teachers' position. In other cases, there is unwillingness on the part of school employers to perform in good faith at the negotiating table.

Teachers have been forced to exhaust every legal remedy in their efforts to have some school boards face the critical needs of education. In rare cases, after all available avenues have been explored, teachers have been faced with two difficult choices: either to ignore deteriorating education conditions or to utilize concerned action to awaken the community.

When the public has been sufficiently informed, it has nearly always responded positively and in support of teacher concerns, but seldom as the result of a *single effort.* Transforming years of apathy, confusion, and lack of understanding is not an overnight project.

Those local associations that have conducted continuous, objective public relations programs have most often found a direct correlation in success at the negotiation table.

Get Organized

The first step in effectively preparing for negotiation is development of an effective organizational framework in which to operate. Each local association has to take a close look at the basic problem of how to organize most effectively to accomplish its goals. And this applies to PR as well as to the basic task of negotiation.

Small school districts and associations, where close working relationships exist and the group meets together often (formally and informally), will no doubt be able to develop proposals to send to the school board without the use of committees. Here, total staff involvement goes into the preparation of proposals; and then a smaller group, acting as a professional negotiation team, meets with representatives of the school board. But it is important that the PR chairman, or someone on the PR committee who is specifically assigned to handle the PR during PN, be included in the hierarchy of the local association if he is to be effective. *Larger associations* might develop a different, more formalized pattern.

The point is, however, that no matter how the local organizes to pursue its PN goals, the PR chairman—or the person handling the assignment—has to be an integral part of that process. Some associations might wish to consider having the PR chairman on the negotiation team. Others will want to have the PR chairman as an official observer. The PR chairman *must* always be closely allied with the negotiation process and privy to the innermost discussions being conducted.

Involvement Before Negotiation

Regardless of the size of the association, local leaders must be sensitive to the needs and aspirations of teachers. Involvement of the general membership of the association and their participation in formation of major concerns is a vital step in the negotiation process. In the early stages of development of negotiation procedures, teachers should have ample opportunity to express their views and concerns. The time to speak out on issues

troubling members of the association is *before* negotiation begins, not after; so a carefully planned, organized system of internal back-and-forth communication is a "must" for PN teams and the members they represent.

Be sure the association takes advantage of the negotiation information and expertise available to it through the state and national associations. The state and NEA have field representatives and consultants available to assist locals. In addition, for each of the past several years the NEA Research Division has surveyed more than 7,000 school systems with enrollments of 1,000 or more on professional negotiation. The results of these surveys—plus description and analysis; data and statistics; and judicial decisions, opinions, and statutes—are available in a nationwide report, published 10 times a year, called *Negotiation Research Digest*. For information, write to the Records Division, NRD, NEA, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Membership involvement in development of proposals is the first step in developing solid membership support for those proposals. Second is teacher understanding and adoption of the final draft of the proposal to be negotiated, plus an orientation to the process of negotiation.

Jack J. Bertolino, field service director of the New Jersey Education Association, underlined the importance of membership involvement in his article on professional negotiation which appeared in an issue of *Today's Education,* the journal of the NEA. Too often, he said, teachers condemn their representatives for failing to keep the membership fully informed of all issues brought to and argued at the negotiating table. Some even demand a blow-by-blow description of all negotiating sessions, including those inevitable personal antagonisms and disagreements that arise.

Some teachers fail to recognize that strategic considerations and good faith negotiation govern the flow of information to the membership and the community. Bertolino cautions local association leaders that proposals should be reviewed, debated, and approved by the membership before ever being presented to the school board.

This is why it is important that the PR chairman and his committee play an active role in two-way membership communi-

cation during the negotiation proposal development period. This is the group charged with the responsibility of advising and assisting association leaders in membership surveys, meetings of study committees, small-group discussions, and other democratic communication vehicles.

A good internal public relations program may involve a number of sending and listening devices, including careful use of the association newsletter and a working program of two-way communication through the association representatives. (See other booklets in this series for guidance and ideas on public relations processes and techniques.)

Just as important is the interpretation of the package to the public in the school district. Joe Doe, citizen, doesn't understand the intricacies of education, let alone the specialized area of school finance. Most citizens know that schools cost them money—and they want to make sure they are getting as big a bang for their buck as possible.

It is possible to head off some adverse headlines about the dollar figure of the PN package if reporters and newsmen understand the need for the additional funds. In other words, when it is demonstrated that a $1.8 million increase in teachers' salaries merely meets the increasing competition between districts for good talent, it takes on a different character than the raw, bald statement that taxes are going up to pay teachers more.

Someone To Direct, Coordinate the PR

Once the final proposals desired by the membership and refined by the PN team are completed, the association PR chairman —or specialist on the PR committee—has another important task. Neither the local association president nor the chief spokesman for the negotiating team will have the time to handle public relations chores, such as contacting the news media and writing press releases, in addition to his regular duties. Both may, and probably will, be called upon to make statements at appropriate times, when the PR chairman has set up the arrangements.

The public relations specialist of the association should have the responsibility for coordinating communications throughout the

negotiation process. Once negotiation begins, association leaders face a serious problem. They must deal in good faith with the school board and keep the support and confidence of teachers. And that is not as easy as it sounds.

Membership understanding of the sensitive, complicated negotiation process will make it easier for teachers to lend their support, trust, and confidence to their negotiators. So it is up to the PR specialist to direct and coordinate transmittal of information to teachers once negotiation gets under way.

One strong reason stands out above all others for the association PR specialist to participate in the preliminary as well as the action stages of negotiation: No one can effectively explain or execute something that he himself does not understand. Only by participation is he likely to fully understand and interpret basic concerns and goals of his fellow teachers. Without such understanding, his efforts to translate are likely to be vague. Possibly they may not even relate to basic goals. But with a thorough background in the discussions that led to proposals and by a constant exposure to the negotiation process, the association PR specialist can properly direct communications on the progress of the talks (or lack of it) to both members and the public. It takes *informed* judgment to decide the advisability and timeliness of releasing pertinent negotiation information to teachers and to others.

Some PR Problems

Never permit another group to dictate the way to tell the story to the membership.

There is no uniform agreement among experienced PR people as to whether or not there should be a press embargo during negotiation. A few associations and school boards have agreed to a "news blackout" during negotiation. However, a number of state association PR directors who have worked with boards are finding that it's better not to have a press embargo agreement. "If there is a news blackout, both sides sit and wait for the other to break the blackout and face the retaliatory statements," comments Frederick Leuschner, PR director for the Pennsylvania State Education Association. "You must assume that there are honorable people on both sides who don't want to ruin negotiation by blab-

bing. Even without a blackout, experienced negotiators are not going to reveal what is really being negotiated."

There is basic agreement, however, among most PR practitioners to avoid issuing progress reports of no substance. Such reports can cause undue anxieties and raise doubts that may develop into problems.

It should always be kept in mind that the school board has a position. Association leaders shouldn't get upset when the board speaks out, nor get trapped into reacting or issuing countercharges to school board statements unless the board releases incorrect factual or misleading information. When the association does speak out, it should be positive in what it says, but point out where the fault lies.

Another major problem is admitting the news media to negotiation sessions.

Most states have an "open meeting" law, that is, a statute which says that meetings of public agencies and bodies must be open to the public and press. Because school boards are public bodies, it is understandable that the interpretation is made that negotiation sessions by boards be open to the public. However, a few states, such as Illinois, have an exclusion factor for board-staff negotiation and permit private sessions for these talks.

Many states have almost automatically interpreted the "open meeting" law as applicable when they begin negotiation. Peter G. Pafiolis, PR director for the Minnesota Education Association, raises one concern that is currently under discussion in his state: "When two or three members of the school board (fewer than the legal number needed to conduct business) meet with the teachers to negotiate, is there a violation of the "open meeting" law because only final action of an agreement can come when the full board meets at an open meeting?"

A few PR directors say that the problem of negotiating in public is both difficult and complex but add that they feel that many of the fears about negotiating in open meetings are largely unfounded.

However, most veteran negotiators say that real negotiation in the glare of the news media is both trying and difficult. Often reporters will claim that when public boards of education and public employees talk about tax dollars it is essential for the news

media to attend. Briefing the press on the progress, but not the details, of the various proposals and counterproposals permits the reporters to stay abreast of developments, but prevents arousing concern over each negotiation point.

"Off-the-record" briefings for reporters can pose a problem. Such a briefing occurs when the association spokesman tells newsmen what has happened, with the understanding that what is told won't be directly quoted or used, but will be used by the reporter only as background on the story. Some reporters find "off-the-record" briefings helpful; some want no part of such briefings unless they can print or broadcast the information; and a few newsmen will attend and then use the information immediately. If you feel that the association will benefit from these briefings, be sure you know how the newsmen regard information given under such circumstances. Most newsmen can be trusted. But if one can't, forget attempting "off-the-record" briefings.

In mid-1968, the Michigan Labor Mediation Board issued the following opinion on the requirement that the news media be present at negotiation sessions:

> *Collective bargaining cannot be effective in the presence of either press or public. Representatives of employers and labor organizations (perhaps because they are human) tend to speak for the public and the news media rather than engage in the collective bargaining procedure. While both sides should have nothing to hide in bargaining if they are bargaining in good faith, neither side is required by law to lead with its best offer or to follow a prescribed pattern of effecting a settlement.*
>
> *. . . We will not impose upon the parties the obligation to bargain in a public arena if they are unwilling to do so. Such an obligation would tend to prolong negotiations and damage the procedure of compromise inherent in collective bargaining.*
>
> *. . . Parenthetically, we believe it advisable for representatives of both public employers and employees to keep their principals advised (including, if it seems wise, the press) of the progress of negotiations. This, however, is apart from the requirement that the press be present at the bargaining session.*

One association–school board negotiation team found a different solution in response to repeated, insistent demands that its

local, small-town weekly newspaper publisher be permitted to sit in on the negotiation sessions. Neither the teachers nor board representatives were in favor of having the press attend the meetings. But their continued refusal to permit it resulted in exaggerated, wildly speculative reports of their sessions by the newspaper. In desperation, both teams agreed to have the journalist attend a session. Then both began a lengthy, five-hour session devoted to minor language changes in the contract. In disgust, the publisher left the session, indicating to both sides that he had "better things to do" with his time "than sit and listen to trivia." Once assured that the negotiators had nothing to hide, he was content to accept periodic status reports of the talks and his speculative news reports ceased!

The Spokesman

One final suggestion . . . Before beginning any communication about negotiation, either inside or outside the organization, association leaders must decide—

Who is the spokesman?

The association president is the public spokesman for a teachers organization; the chief negotiator or chairman of the PN team is the spokesman for a teachers organization *at the negotiating table.* These two responsibilities should not be confused. The president of the association is the person quoted in news stories, although it is the PR chairman or specialist who handles the mechanics and keeps open the lines of communication with newsmen and the membership.

Advance Stories, a Must

How's this for a business-like approach to a public announcement at the beginning of negotiation:

TCEA Plans for Talks

Preparation by the Traverse City Education Association negotiation committee for the 1969-70 contract talks with the Traverse City board of education are

under way, it has been announced by Tom Mack, TCEA president.

Negotiation is slated to begin Feb. 28 with a written preliminary submission by the TCEA, Mack stated.

Negotiation committee members . . .

That newspaper story was followed two weeks later by this account:

TCEA LISTS PROPOSALS FOR TEACHER PACT

First Negotiation Session Slated Next Monday

Further salary schedule adjustments, relief of excessive class loads, and binding arbitration of grievances appeared to be the major items in a summary of proposed amendments to the master contract for Traverse City teachers, as submitted to the school board Tuesday by the Traverse City Education Association.

Tom Mack, president of TCEA, said that the TCEA's public presentation of its goals is part of a program that the association is undertaking this year to promote "smooth" negotiation sessions.

He said . . .

These two newspaper accounts were followed a few days later by a release from the school board, indicating the goals of that group in forthcoming negotiation with teachers. Incidentally, the board's release contained this statement:

News media will not be present at the sessions, but will be kept informed of the progress of negotiation.

The following day, on the newspaper's editorial page, this editorial appeared:

As We See It

A GOOD START

The opening negotiating session between representatives of the Traverse City Education Association and the school board has been held. Each side has presented a summary of master con-

tract amendments desired, and a tentative schedule of discussion sessions and topics has been set up. So far, so good.

Early signs are that the experience gained in the two previous years of negotiation will lead to smoother and more sophisticated negotiating this year.

Publication at the outset of goals on both sides is a good indication, for it shows an increasing awareness of the need to keep the public fully informed.

It would be naive not to expect disagreements and hard bargaining over some points. But it is entirely possible this year that disagreements will be taken more in stride and that negotiating skills learned over the past two years will come into full play.

In any event, most people are hoping that negotiation will not become big news as in the past. The mood is for a return to normal relations. Accordingly, the early signs of good-humored talks are most welcome.

Here's the way another association released a story on the start of negotiation:

Begin Contract Talks With HMEA Teachers

Preliminary negotiation for a new contract for Horace Mann School District teachers has begun.

The present two-year contract expires at midnight, June 30.

June Holmes, HMEA president, said a few preliminary sessions have been held and hopes are that serious bargaining will soon get under way.

Miss Holmes said preliminary work in preparing HMEA proposals began last September with a survey of the membership regarding priority items for negotiation. HMEA executive board members and HMEA association representatives as well as committee chairmen met with the negotiating team to develop proposals to be brought up for discussion.

This release was issued by a local association beginning its first year of negotiation:

> **The first negotiating session between the Horace Mann Education Association and the school board will be held in the city council chambers Monday evening at 7:30, January 12.**
>
> **Representing the HMEA will be Jason Jenks, social studies teacher at Jefferson Junior High School . . .**
>
> **The HMEA was recognized by the local school board on December 8 as the official negotiating agent for the teachers of the Horace Mann schools. This will be the first year of formal negotiation between teachers and board members on comprehensive proposals covering conditions of teaching.**

All of these examples are better than the news story that, unfortunately, is seen all too often, that is, when a local association makes no effort to initiate press reports right at the start of negotiation and that initiative is taken by school officials:

New Teacher Salaries To Cost County $5 Million

> **The new salary schedule for teachers submitted Tuesday by the Horace Mann Education Association is estimated to cost the county over $5 million.**
>
> **School Board Chairman William R. Highstedt said the HMEA demands were "ridiculous" and would "break the district's financial back."**
>
> **When the total cost of the pay increases demanded by the teachers and the increased costs of maintaining present programs are balanced against expected revenues, the county will be left with an increased deficit in the budget.**
>
> **"That deficit will amount to approximately the same as the cost of the teachers' pay demands," Highstedt said.**
>
> **This will leave the board of education with two choices: either to cut the budget and reduce the school program or to raise taxes. It is expected that the board will do both.**

"Image" problems have already begun for this association. Again, the time to establish a pleasant, business-like relationship with newsmen is *before* initial negotiation stories appear in the press or on broadcast media.

In most communities school board members and school administrators are personally acquainted with members of the news media, especially those in management and editorial areas. The school board "side" of the story is familiar and believable to members of the press and broadcast newsmen, largely because the entire school story has been furnished for years by school district officials.

Newsmen are often surprised to learn there is another "side" to the story, especially one that reports that teaching conditions in the school district are less than satisfactory. Many school boards and administrators still feel that the "best PR" (propaganda) tells only the good things about schools—until they need additional money, then a number of reasons are usually uncovered.

News Releases During Negotiation

Here are a few sample news releases issued during negotiation:

> The Horace Mann Education Association negotiating team met with school board representatives last night in the first session to develop a master contract for teachers. The school board's negotiating team includes Jack Pierce, assistant superintendent for personnel, as spokesman, and board members Stan Riegel and George Wells. HMEA Chief Negotiator Jason Jenks went through the entire proposal with board representatives, who will now study the contract before the next session.
>
> A regular schedule of meetings was established at last night's meeting. Negotiators will meet every Monday evening at 7:30 at the city council chambers, until further notice.
>
> * * *

Horace Mann Education Association negotiators reported today that following 10 weeks of meetings with the Horace Mann school board negotiating representatives, the school board has not yet made any counterproposals to the original HMEA proposal.

HMEA President June Holmes indicated some irritation at this lack of progress. "After putting in many hours of work preparing this document and researching for each section of it, we are unhappy that the school board has not seen fit to respond in any concrete fashion," Miss Holmes said.

"Neither has the board agreed to any single one of our proposals. We are beginning to wonder if they really intend to negotiate in good faith," she concluded.

* * *

Horace Mann Education Association negotiators received counterproposals on the first 10 items of their contract proposal last night. Assistant Superintendent Jack Pierce said that further counterproposals were in the making, and more would be presented at the first meeting. In the meantime, teacher-negotiators promised to react to the first board counterproposals next Monday night.

* * *

Horace Mann Education Association President June Holmes reported today that more than half of the contract between teachers and school board had been completed following last Monday's negotiation session. Miss Holmes reported that attitudes are excellent at the sessions and that great progress was being made. She indicated that the school system would be the beneficiary of a better program and improved staff morale as a result of this new contract.

* * *

After 18 weeks of fruitless negotiation, the Horace Mann Education Association team called for mediation last night. Miss June Holmes, HMEA president, said that an impasse had been

reached and that a state mediator had been requested to enter the negotiation.

"The board has not seriously responded to any of our proposals," she said. "We hope that an impartial third party can persuade them that delaying tactics and surface bargaining will only harm the school system and intensify already bad morale in this district," Miss Holmes stated.

Teachers will meet Thursday afternoon at the Elks Hall to hear a report from HMEA negotiators and to plan a future course of action.

* * *

In none of the above illustrations was any specific proposal discussed which might take the negotiation outside the proper arena of the negotiating table. Yet sufficient information was given to establish attitudes and knowledge about progress. Other examples are contained in the Appendix of this handbook.

Get To Know Newsmen

The association PR chairman should personally contact all news reporters or editors in the area when negotiation is slated to begin. The first step is to establish an informal friendship with the newspaper reporter, his editor, and radio and television newsmen. This will be a major job and a continual one, since there is a rapid turnover in the ranks of newsmen. It is a key assignment in developing positive relationships with news media personnel. News media relations, like most others, are just good personal relations. Some association leaders and PR chairmen make it a practice to take newsmen to lunch occasionally just to get to know the problems of news reporting better. Sometimes newsmen will offer suggestions on how the association can improve its public relations. It should be stressed that there should be no attempt to influence reporters or give the impression that you are attempting to "buy" them. The lunch should simply be an occasion to get to know each other better.

Newsmen need to know how to get in touch with the PR chairman and association president. Telephone numbers at school

and at home should be readily available. The PR specialist should assure newsmen that he will keep all media informed as soon as something happens or can be released. If a local PR chairman experiences particular problems with news media, he should get in touch with the state association PR director for suggestions and help.

A newsman needs background information. If he is new to his job, he will want to know the history of recognition, election, and negotiation in the school district. He would appreciate a copy of last year's contract. And whether newcomer or seasoned reporter, he needs to understand what the association will and will not be able to report after each negotiating session. The PR chairman should explain why it is not wise to discuss all of the negotiation in the media:

> Negotiations between teachers and boards of education are structured discussions of delicate and vital conditions of employment. The very nature of negotiation dictates that usually one group starts from a "high" position and the other group starts from a "low" position. At this initial stage, both positions would be unreasonable and subject to misunderstanding and misinterpretation by the public. The process of give-and-take in negotiation will bring a reasonable agreement, but not if the details and specifics are being cussed and discussed at every coffee break in the community, with all of the misinformation and *emotion* that such a process would evoke.

The PR specialist for his association must be fair and honest with newsmen. The cause of the association will not be aided by misleading propaganda or through a vendetta against one of the school board members or representatives. If the association has a legitimate cause, if its story is presented honestly and with background facts, the association will usually get fair treatment from newsmen. This means telling the story without defensiveness, emotionalism, coloring, half-truths, or character assassination.

PR During Impasse

As we have repeatedly said, impasse time is too late to *begin* the important job of building public understanding and support. Local citizens seldom have a good understanding of the issues in a negotiation impasse between teachers and school boards. Unless a planned public relations program has been in effect from the very beginning of negotiation, the public will hardly understand what the impasse, let alone the negotiation process, is all about.

When an impasse develops, when mediation, fact-finding, or arbitration is sought, the association's PR chairman must immediately inform both the membership and the public of the nature of the impasse. Simple statements to the press that teachers just want more money will win few supporters. The association's position needs to be carefully and clearly explained and interpreted.

Statements should be hand delivered to newsmen. The PR specialist has the additional task of informing reporters of the nature of mediation, fact-finding, or arbitration and of making sure newsmen have adequate background information of events leading to the impasse. (If the PR specialist has done his job throughout negotiation, this background information should already be in evidence.)

Newsmen will want to know the schedules of the association president and chief negotiator and where they will be at all times. If reporters wish to interview the association spokesman, the PR specialist should make arrangements for that interview or hold a news conference. But he needs to make sure the association spokesman has mastered the 3R's before a press conference . . . that he is *rested, rehearsed,* and *ready.* A "dry run" should be conducted in advance of the interviewing, and the PR specialist and one or two other appropriate people should play the roles of critical questioners. The association spokesman should be prepared for "traps" and leading questions. He should be prepared for what may be considered "improper" questions and how to field such questions.

It is sometimes advisable to purchase newspaper space and radio advertising time to promote the views of the association when an impasse develops. Use this approach cautiously, however, and seek expert help from your state or NEA PR specialist.

Such advertisements augment news stories and give the association a chance to tell its full side of the story in a manner not always possible through regular news columns or news broadcasts.

The PR specialist will have to keep on top of every move during mediation or fact-finding sessions. Newsmen will need to have the following information in advance of their deadlines:

Time and place of next negotiating session
When mediation was requested
Who the mediator is
When mediation will take place
General reports of "some progress" or "no progress" after each mediation session.

A book could be written on public relations during a time of crisis. In a few words, however, here are some helpful tips to remember:

• There are two sides of opinion on whether or not a special effort should be made to complete negotiation before the close of school. Many negotiators argue that an otherwise successful negotiation was upset when the talks were continued into the summer. Sometimes school board negotiators will change their strategy if they know that the teachers' negotiating team is "all alone" during the summer and communication with the association membership is practically nonexistent. Other negotiators point out that many agreements have been "sweetened" by school boards during summer months as the opening of school approached. Some negotiators believe it best to hold out until near the start of the school year.

• Associations anticipating summer negotiation sessions should have each of its faculty representatives obtain the summer mailing addresses of all faculty members in his building. Some associations have asked teachers to self-address six or seven envelopes during a final late May or early June progress report meeting on negotiation. These envelopes are then used to send special editions of the association newsletter or periodic reports to teachers during the summer negotiation sessions. These communications will help keep teachers up-to-date on the summer status and outlook for any special teacher action that may be needed.

• In addition to printed reports, many local associations are now installing a telephone with an automatic answering feature. Reports of negotiation progress and other information can be easily recorded on these low-cost devices, and teachers need only dial a telephone number to get up-to-the-minute information 24 hours a day. Your local telephone company business office can give you the details. (See the Appendix for some sample messages that have been used on answering services.)

When a crisis can't be avoided, remember the following:

• Take the association side of the story to the news media first! Don't wait for the reporters to come to the association or for the administration or board to issue the first statement. The side that grabs the initiative in this area may well win the war.

• Older teachers, especially women, can be most effective in telling the public why teachers feel the way they do. Older teachers are sometimes slow to get involved in a crisis, but once they do, their years of frustration in trying to do a good job in the classroom usually makes them excellent, effective, and knowledgeable spokesmen. Remember, in medium- and small-sized communities many of the residents, and perhaps some of the newsmen, have been taught by the older teachers and often carry a warm, personal regard for them. Then, too, a militant older teacher is generally more believable than a younger person, from whom a militant attitude is more likely to be expected.

• Don't be afraid to invite probing questions from reporters. They want to know why there is a work stoppage or why sanctions have been applied. Don't hesitate to give them background briefings on the history of the dispute.

• Keep the "monkey" on the other person's back. Publicly call for immediate talks to resolve the issue at any time and any place.

• Keep the story fresh. Prepare daily news releases stating and restating the association's side of the story. Keep the association spokesman before the public eye through news releases and face-to-face news conferences.

• Participate in any special "crisis" radio or television broadcasts (call-in tape talk shows are excellent ways to explain

the association's side of a dispute). Such programs demand informed individuals who speak well and do not lose their "cool" easily.

- When possible, issue fact sheets or "white papers" to your community's citizens fully disclosing the scope of the problem and what is needed to resolve it.
- Ask the news media and leading citizens to lend their offices to the resolution of the problem.
- Hold community meetings to explain the association's side of the story.
- Avoid, at all costs, using children in the dispute.
- Keep association statements and communications on a high, professional plane. Avoid mudslinging and name calling. Keep the public eye focused on the dispute and the solution, not the personalities.
- Always leave room for the other side to settle the issue without losing all dignity and face. The association is after a professional victory, not conquest of an opponent.

When Negotiation Is Completed

At the conclusion of successful negotiation, the PR specialist must quickly, accurately, and candidly communicate the results to the membership and to the public. It is the job of the PR chairman to make certain that the association's story is told. Joint statements usually cannot accomplish this. Let the administration and board tell their story through their own PR channels. The association has a responsibility to reflect its position independently of the other side.

Externally, what has been "won" by negotiation should be translated for the public into benefits for children. The children are the ones that the public is essentially interested in. By showing what PN has gained for children, the education of the public in the process of PN will be greatly enhanced.

Internally, the same story that was told to the public is told to the membership. But greater emphasis and comprehensiveness should be placed upon benefits that directly affect the membership. Each teacher should receive a printed copy of the agree-

ment won through negotiation. Meetings should be held with the membership or with faculty representatives, who must then go over the agreement with the teachers in their buildings. In addition, the association's newsletter should proclaim the benefits won in the agreement. From time to time during the year, paragraphs from the agreement make excellent "fillers" for the association's newsletter under the heading "Do You Know . . ."

If credit is due the school board for making an extreme effort to provide a better program, usually within a very tight budget, then the association should give it that credit. It will set the atmosphere for more successful negotiation next time. And "next time" may not be so very far away when it comes to beginning negotiation.

Newsmen need to be personally thanked for their efforts in objectively reporting the negotiation story. Over and over again, newsmen are quick to remember the complaints they receive for doing a poor job of reporting. But they also seldom forget a personal visit from the PR chairman or thank-you letter from the president of the local education association!

Finally, once an agreement is "won," the year-round task of seeing that the agreement is kept begins. Few things will harm an association more than winning an agreement that is merely words on paper. How to organize and enforce an agreement is no small job.

For assistance in the actual negotiation process as well as how to enforce an agreement, contact your state or NEA field representative. If you do not know whom to contact, write to the Affiliate Services Section, Division of Field Services, NEA, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (telephone: 202—223-9400).

For assistance in the public relations aspects of negotiation, contact the public relations department of your state association or your NEA regional office. If you do not know whom to contact, write to Negotiation PR, Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (telephone: 202—223-9400).

Inquiries for assistance will be coordinated with your state association and the NEA regional office, and appropriate help will be assigned to assist you.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE SCHEDULE DURING NEGOTIATION

#1 Announcement of recognition as a negotiating unit for teachers of the school district. Method used (election or board stipulation), law involved, if any. Type of area covered by stipulation, such as salaries, conditions of teaching. Give examples of the type of teaching condition teachers wish to improve.

#2 Names of association negotiators. Date, time, and place of first negotiating session. How membership was involved in determining teacher proposals.

#3 (Immediately after first negotiation session) Report on the general nature of opening meeting, for example, that the teachers' proposal was reviewed by the association representatives. Name the school board's team and repeat names of association negotiating team.

#4 (Immediately after Release #3) Translate the principal proposals being made by teachers in terms of what they will accomplish for children and the educational program of the district, in language the average citizen can understand.

#5 (And after each negotiating session) Report on what happened at the most recent negotiating session. In general terms, indicate the degree of progress being made or lack of it. If negotiation is progressing smoothly, tell the public so; the board will like that. If negotiation is proceeding badly, say so and why. Be matter of fact, not vicious. Tell it straight and objectively. The real "muscle" at the negotiating table is built because teachers have a good cause, one that is legal, reasonable, and practicable at this time.

#6 (If mediation is requested) Report on the impasse and that mediation has been requested. State objectively what general topics are involved in the impasse.

#7 Report when the first mediation session will be held. Give the name, title, and address of the mediator. Describe what is involved in the process of mediation.

#8 (If mediation is unsuccessful) Report the lack of success of mediation and that the next step, fact-finding, has been requested. Explain fact-finding. Describe the issues remaining to be submitted to fact-finding.

#9 Write succeeding stories on fact-finding sessions.

May 12, 1968

Mr. Mike Paton
Port Huron Times Herald
Port Huron, Michigan

Dear Mike,

Now that we are starting negotiation with the district, I would like to assure you that we intend to keep you informed as to our progress. I shall simply release the facts as I see them, leaving the journalistic style up to you.

As a matter of procedure, I will personally deliver any release to all three media early in the morning on the day of the release. It is our intent to keep the community informed and your cooperation is appreciated.

30

If you have reason to contact the PHEA, I can be reached at Washington Intermediate School, phone 5-6270, or at home, phone 5-9075.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Sterling
President, PHEA

MS/id

Miss Mary E. Sterling
1215 Lincoln Avenue
Port Huron, Michigan
July 29, 1968

Mr. John H. Burde
Principal of Grant School
1313 - 20th Street
Port Huron, Michigan

Dear John:

A few weeks ago we sent a letter to our teacher membership indicating the progress being made at the negotiating table and also listing some of the board's proposals. In addition to this, we informed the membership of our newly installed answering service. This service enables us to communicate daily, on a 24-hour basis, with our interested colleagues.

As was reported on Friday's tape, progress is being made in many of the noneconomic areas. Some very important items—such as class size, guaranteed relief time for elementary teachers, change in the index and base salary figure, and the calendar—have not yet been resolved.

Many of you have been asking the association about the status of negotiation. May we invite and encourage you to use the answering service. Simply dial 984-2346, and you will hear a 1-minute report. This report is changed at the conclusion of each session, usually about 10:30 at night.

Thank you for the encouragement which many of you have personally expressed to me. This is most gratifying, especially at a time like this.

Sincerely,

Mary Sterling
President

TAPED COMMUNICATION . . . ANSWERING SERVICE

NUMBER FIVE. . . . July 26, 1968

Thank you for calling. This is your PHEA negotiation report. The teams met for seven hours today, Friday, July 26.

Today, real progress was made. Tentative agreement has been reached on all of Article II in the contract, which is entitled Personnel Procedures.

The major change that has been made in this article is the inclusion of a certification clause. Seventy-seven percent of the staff had signed a petition this year directing the negotiating team to have this clause included in the contract.

A total of 10 changes have been made in this article, not including the housekeeping items.

The teams will be negotiating from 1 until 5 p.m. on Monday, July 29. The teams will be attending the board of education meeting Monday night, July 29, at 7:30.

President Mary Sterling reporting.

TAPED COMMUNICATION . . . ANSWERING SERVICE

NUMBER SIX. . . . July 29, 1968

Thank you for calling. This is your PHEA negotiation report. The teams met from 1 to 5:30 p.m. today, Monday, July 29.

Article II, on which we have reached tentative agreement, has been fully rewritten and proofread. The teams have now turned their attention to discussing in greater detail Article III, which deals with leaves of absence.

Although headway is being made on many of the noneconomic items, many of our most important proposals remain unsettled. Some of these unsettled areas are the salary, with a change in the index; class size; guaranteed relief time for elementary teachers; and the grievance procedure.

The teams will not be negotiating on Monday night because of the board of education meeting at 7:30. We will resume negotiation at 1 p.m., Tuesday, July 30.

President Mary Sterling reporting.

TAPED COMMUNICATION

NUMBER 15. . . . August 9, 1968

Thank you for calling. This is your PHEA negotiation report. The teams met for three hours today, Friday, August 9.

Yesterday, August 8, your PHEA team met for nine hours with our MEA field representative to prepare a package counter-proposal.

Today, the ninth, the PHEA offered the board's team a three-year contract proposal in package form. The term *package* means that all of the items would need to be accepted to reach tentative agreement on the entire contract.

The board of education will meet in closed session on Monday to consider our offer. The board meets in open session at 7:30 p.m. Monday.

The two teams will meet Tuesday, August 13, at 7 p.m. to discuss the board's reaction.

This message will remain unchanged until late Tuesday evening after the session.

President Mary Sterling reporting.

PHEA NEWS RELEASE. . . . August 17, 1968

Sent to Radio Stations WHLS and WPHM and the *Times Herald* paper.

Negotiation between the Port Huron Education Association and the Port Huron Area School District has reached an impasse.

A mediator has been requested and will meet with the teams Monday morning.

The Michigan Education Association has called all unsettled districts throughout the state into a special session at Battle Creek on Saturday, August 17.

The PHEA Executive Board will meet on Sunday evening to make necessary plans.

Thank you.

Mary Sterling
President

TAPED COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS

NUMBER 22. . . . August 20, 1968

Thank you for calling. This is your PHEA negotiation report.

Mediation ended at 4 a.m., Tuesday. All impasse issues have been solved with the exception of the salary.

Your PHEA team and the board's team are meeting Tuesday afternoon, August 20, in an additional effort to reach total agreement.

President Mary Sterling reporting.

September 13, 1968

Mr. John Hill
Radio Station WPHM
Port Huron, Michigan

Dear John:

Just a little note thanking you for accurately and frequently reporting to the community during contract negotiation.

Your friendly and patient understanding in dealing with the association certainly helped me during those trying weeks.

Sincerely,

Mary Sterling
PHEA President

THE SCRANTON TIMES, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1968

We've Tried

We've tried to negotiate a fair and reasonable contract with the school board. Up to this very moment they have failed to realistically recognize our problems. We're not asking for more than we should reasonably expect. We're trying to bring the level of teacher salaries and benefits in Scranton up to the level of other comparable districts in the state.

We're trying to improve the quality of education in Scranton. Over one-half of our proposals to the school board were designed to raise the quality of education in our district. We desperately need to expand and improve the physical education, art and music programs. Our guidance program is woefully inadequate. And yet the school board refuses to even consider our professional participation in these areas. Is anyone better qualified than the teachers to advise on such matters?

If the school board fails to face these problems, it is Scranton and the children of Scranton who will suffer. The Scranton School District will not be able to hold or attract competent teachers. New industry will not want to locate in Scranton if we have an inferior public school system.

Here are the facts. Know them and judge for yourself. Your child's education and the future of your city are at stake.

How do Scranton teacher salaries compare with other cities in Pennsylvania?

Out of 55 second-class school districts, Scranton ranks 21st in starting salary and 38th in maximum salary for a Bachelor's Degree. For a Master's Degree, Scranton ranks 44th in minimum salary and 34th in maximum salary. This is a very poor showing for the fifth largest school district in the state.

Is Scranton spending too much for the education of its children?

Out of 55 second-class school districts in Pennsylvania, Scranton ranks 45th in amount spent for instruction per weighted pupil. Is this fair to your child?

Where will the money come from?

The school district will receive a bonus state subsidy payment of $338,779 in April, 1969. There is $275,000 left in the budget from last year. Without any increase in taxes and without cutting any items from the budget, these two sums would be enough to provide a $778 increase in salary for Scranton teachers.

Has the school board offered the teachers a fair salary increase?

The $300 proposed by the school board would be less than a 4% salary increase for the teachers. The board has granted nonprofessional employees a 6% salary increase and has given an across-the-board increase of $500 to certain "top brass." Why have they offered so little to teachers who are the heart of our educational system?

Scranton Education Association
PSEA—NEA

Never underestimate the power of public opinion. The following editorial which appeared on the front page of the *Pittsburgh* (Pa.) *Press* (January 13, 1969), is an excellent example of the type to avoid through skilled negotiation and public relations:

An Editorial: Rule or Ruin?

There no longer can be any doubt about the ultimate aim of the AFL-CIO Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers.

Its aim is to rule or ruin.

For the second time in less than a year, the PFT is threatening to close down the City's public schools by going on strike Thursday.

Such a strike would, of course, be illegal. But the PFT doesn't give a hoot about the law. It is a law unto itself.

Such a strike would, of course, disrupt the schooling of thousands of students even if it fails to empty the classrooms. But the PFT doesn't give a hoot about that either.

In fact, the PFT boasts that unionized custodians who tend the school furnaces have promised to freeze out any youngsters who do report for classes at picketed schools.

Such wanton disregard for the law, for the welfare of students, for the processes of reason and for the burdensome dilemma of the City's beleaguered taxpayers demonstrates clearly that the PFT is power-drunk with reckless leadership.

Just two weeks ago the Board of Education handed out a quarter-million dollars to PFT members who had forfeited pay raises by illegally striking last winter.

For this gesture of forgiveness, the Board has been rewarded with a new strike threat. Not only that, the PFT says it will stay on strike until it gets everything it wants—including a guarantee that strikers won't be penalized for deliberately breaking the law.

It remains to be seen whether the public is so helpless that it must surrender to this type of brazen bulldozing. Or whether there still are public officials—including judges — with the courage to uphold the public interest.

This is booklet #3 in a series of 10 booklets written for education associations by the public relations department of your state association and the NEA's Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations and Division of Field Services.

Additional copies of this booklet can be obtained from your state association or at $1 each from Publications-Sales, National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Orders for $2 or less must be accompanied by payment. *Quantity discounts:* 2-9 copies, 10 percent; 10 or more copies, 20 percent.

Order Stock No. 381-11902, *The PR in PN.*

For further information about other booklets in this series, write to the public relations director of your state association or to PR Bookshelf, Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Booklets in this series are—

Booklet #1—School Finance Campaign Handbook
#2—Tips for the PR Chairman
#3—The PR in PN
#4—Internal PR
#5—Publishing a Newsletter
#6—A Primer in Publicity
#7—The Feedback Process
#8—Developing Citizen Committees
#9—Press, Radio, and TV Tips
#10—Community Decision-Making